

Service Area Advisory Committee 6

February 5, 2015

TO: Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
Second District

FROM: Dorothy Banks, Co-Chair and Paco Retana, Co-Chair
Service Area Advisory Committee

SUBJECT: **Board of Supervisor's Motion to Consolidate Department of
Health Services, Mental Health and Public Health**

Service Area Advisory Committee (SAAC) 6, which includes the south, southwest, and southeastern portions of Los Angeles County, has some concerns about the proposed "consolidation" of the Department of Mental Health, Department of Health Services, and the Department of Public Health. As our representative and the Supervisor that covers our Service Area you know the mental health needs are great in our community which requires the public agencies that provide these services to be engaged and involved. The proposed consolidation would remove access to the "Director" and leadership of the new department from us, the Service Area Advisory Committee made up of family members, community members, consumers, providers and constituents.

Furthermore, we are concerned about how budgetary operations will be structured under this consolidation. We want the budgets to be kept separate and be managed by the Department of Mental Health. This would ensure services funded by Proposition 63, which our community fought hard to get, be managed and maintained by the Department of Mental Health. These services have allowed for many innovative mental health programs, some of which have proved valuable in our community, largely African-American and Latino. We are especially interested in ensuring and prioritizing that evidence based treatment practice models are culturally and linguistically responsive in meeting the health and mental health needs of the vulnerable community we live and work in. This can only be done if our input is sought and valued. Thus far, the Department of Health Services has no track record in involving stakeholders like us in any of its decision about their services. If your motion moves forward it would be important to establish a community and constituent oversight committee to ensure services are adequate for all but especially for those in a high need community like South Los Angeles.

Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
February 5, 2015
Page 2

Lastly, our SAAC is requesting complete transparency from the future working administration. The impact of the "sudden" motion to consolidate the three Departments giving us less than one week to have input has not engendered "trust" from our SAAC or community. Through our Stakeholder Engagement System in the Department of Mental Health which includes all the Service Area Advisory Committees this "motion" would have been discussed for input. To us this belated process while admirable leaves us questioning a future under the direction of the Department of Health Services.

We will continue to work through whatever decision is made, but our concerns should be considered.

DB:PR:lg

c: Mental Health Commission
Christina Ghaly, M.D., CEO